



June is National Family Month

KEYS TO A HAPPY FAMILY

Being part of a family is probably the single most important role a person has in a lifetime and most of us do it with little or no training. With so many roles to fulfill in life, we may begin to let our focus fade from those things that ensure our family members feel like valued people in our lives.

It's not uncommon to take our family relationships for granted, but even those people who are in positions of providing unconditional love and support need our consideration and appreciation. Consider the following qualities of your family:

Communication

No matter how well you feel you know someone, or how well you think they know you, people should never assume or predict someone else's thoughts and feelings. Effective communication takes effort. In addition to learning to listen and ask questions, it means sharing ideas, fears, dreams and goals, as well as talking about needs and expectations. We all feel that we rush through our days and have periods of time when our schedules get hectic, but it is important to set aside time to have meaningful conversations on a regular basis. Some people designate dinner time as "family time" or schedule one-on-one time with family members so that individual needs are met.

Mutual trust

Mutual trust is developed when promises are kept and a supportive atmosphere exists. Healthy communication patterns strongly contribute to a sense of trust. Also, parents teach their children principles of trust by being consistent and creating a structure that provides elements of security.

Privacy and individuality

Family members who trust one another are more comfortable respecting each other's right to privacy and individuality. This includes different interests, personality styles and levels of need for privacy. Even children need to experience privacy and to feel supported in their individuality because this contributes to their confidence, independence, and ability to respect the rights and preferences of others.

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Family togetherness

Healthy families spend quality time together. It's how we learn to know, appreciate and love one another. It's a way of building memories, a sense of history, security and inter-connectedness. Healthy families also have the ability to laugh at themselves and with one another. Play time is a special form of family togetherness that emphasizes shared leisure and humorous experiences.

Parental power

While all family members have equal rights, they don't have equal power. Sometimes it's a challenge for parents to make decisions based on the needs of the whole family, especially when they don't coincide with the wishes and opinions of their children, but it has been proven that children thrive when their parents maintain the decision-making role, as well as set and enforce clear boundaries.

Responsibility

Highly-functioning households maintain that all family members share in household responsibilities. This ensures that everyone shares the burden and everyone enjoys the benefits; as well as reinforces the importance of learning to work through problems together and accept responsibility for individual contributions. Even young children can be included in tasks because it contributes to their sense of value to the family unit. Expectations should be clear and reasonable, and everyone should be praised for a job well done or given a chance to correct mistakes.

Family traditions

Traditions help to create a shared sense of permanence and celebration. Often, traditions include ritual activities surrounding special family events. It's important to document traditions by collecting stories and photos for future reflection.

For more information about family dynamics, parenting skills, or resolving conflict, contact SYMMETRY at (414) 256-4800 or (800) 236-7905 for confidential assistance.



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